



State Senator Carlos Uresti

CAPITOL UPDATE

WINTER 2013-14

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The Senate of The State of Texas



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Dear Friends,

It was an honor and a privilege to represent the people of Senate District 19 in the 83rd Texas Legislature. My fourth session in the Senate was marked by a number of accomplishments on issues important to our families and our communities, but it would not have been possible without your confidence and support.

Texas is enjoying an economic resurgence, thanks in large part to the unprecedented oil boom in the Permian Basin and Eagle Ford Shale. District 19 is in the forefront of this historic event, with energy jobs supporting hard-working Texans, their local governments, and schools.

One of my top priorities was getting help for battered county roads in these energy regions, and Senate Bill 1747 will do just that. It creates a \$225 million Transportation Infrastructure Fund that will help maintain county roads as gateways to the oil fields, keeping the oil boom alive and Texas thriving.

I also worked with my colleagues to advance three critical components of Texas' near- and long-term future:

- Funding for public education
- The State Water Plan
- Transportation infrastructure

There's much more, and for details I invite you to look inside.

I want to thank the people of Senate District 19 for giving me the opportunity to serve and wish you a safe and prosperous year.

Semper Fi!

CARLOS URESTI
State Senator, District 19



COMMITTEES:

- ★ ADMINISTRATION, VICE CHAIR
- ★ AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS, VICE CHAIR
- ★ HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
- ★ NATURAL RESOURCES
- ★ TRANSPORTATION
- ★ SELECT COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION FUNDING
- ★ NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES' STANDING HEALTH COMMITTEE
- ★ SENATE HISPANIC CAUCUS, CHAIRMAN
- ★ THE ENERGY COUNCIL

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83RD SESSION UPDATE

ON THE JOB

Sen. Uresti maintained a 99.9 percent voting record in the 83rd Regular Session, missing only three record votes of the 3,939 votes taken. Senate Secretary Patsy Spaw said the senator's attendance and voting record ***“demonstrate your dedication and remarkable commitment to your duties as a state senator and the people of Senatorial District 19.”***



PUBLIC EDUCATION

Thanks to a resurgence of the Texas economy and additional tax revenues generated by the oil boom, the Legislature was able to restore more than \$3 billion that was cut from public schools in the 2011 session. Lawmakers also revised school curriculum requirements, giving students more choices in the classes they can take, **and reduced the number of end-of-course exams that students must pass to graduate, from 15 to 5.**



CHILD PROTECTION

Sen. Uresti worked to increase funding for Child Protective Services, including more money for prevention programs. He also passed legislation requiring special training for CPS employees who are hired for, or promoted to, supervisory positions. The goal is to ensure that supervisors are well equipped before they begin their new responsibilities and thus help reduce the agency's staff turnover rate. Another Uresti bill establishes a pilot program in Bexar County to provide specialized training to foster parents of children with severe mental health needs or those who have experienced extreme trauma.



PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

At the request of the Bexar County District Attorney's Office, Sen. Uresti passed legislation banning the manufacture, sale, distribution, purchase, or possession of license plate flippers, a device that allows a motorist to quickly switch



Sen. Uresti with leaders from Maverick County

license plates to avoid paying toll fees or to evade detection by law enforcement. Another bill allows disabled Texans and veterans who rely on service animals, such as Seeing Eye dogs, to have unfettered access to food establishments and retail stores.



WATER AND ROADS

Lawmakers turned to the rainy day fund to address the state's water and transportation infrastructure needs. Texas voters signed off on Proposition 6, a constitutional amendment to use \$2 billion for the State Water Plan, as much of the state suffers through a prolonged drought. In November 2014, voters will get a chance to approve another amendment that would invest \$1.2 billion from oil and gas severance taxes in highway construction and maintenance.



AGRICULTURE

Senate Bill 772 eliminates obsolete and redundant reporting requirements for the Texas Department of Agriculture and improves the agency's reporting schedules. The government efficiency measure will eliminate duplicative or unnecessary reports, making the department more responsive to client needs.



LEGISLATION FOR COUNTIES

Val Verde County — Adds the county court at law judge as a member of the Val Verde county juvenile board, putting into statute a policy that has proven to work for the county for the last couple of decades; allows Val Verde County to collect a 2 percent hotel tax within the municipal limits or extraterritorial jurisdiction of cities in the county, which will now have the same ability as the City of Del Rio to collect the tax.

Edwards County — Allows the county's juvenile board to enter into an agreement with one or more



Sen. Uresti with students from the San Antonio Christian School

83RD SESSION UPDATE



Sen. Uresti, guests Daniela and Elyssa Chavez; Statewide Blue Ribbon Task Force members Annette Burrbus-Clay, Nancy Harper, Mary Tipps, and Madeline McClure; and DFPS Commissioner John Specia mark Child Abuse Prevention Month on the Senate floor

counties that are adjacent or in close proximity to operate a joint juvenile board that will appoint one fiscal officer to receive and disburse funds for the board.

Bexar County — Places San Antonio within the borders covered by the San Antonio Urban Land Bank Program, which will identify, acquire, manage, and dispose of unproductive, underutilized, or otherwise deteriorating properties in order to create safe, healthy, and sustainable neighborhoods.

Reeves County — Creates a Groundwater Conservation District in Reeves County, **with voter approval**, allowing the county to manage, protect, and preserve its aquifer.

Atascosa County — Establishes a county court of law.

Frio County — Revises the hotel occupancy tax to stimulate the local economy.



NEW RULES FOR THE ROAD

The 83rd Legislature toughened several traffic laws that Texas drivers need to know about before hitting the road.

It's been against the law for some time to use a cellphone while driving in an active school zone, **but now the law has been extended to all school property, including parking lots and student drop-offs.** The same exemptions apply — you can use your cell in a school zone if you're stopped or have a hands-free device, and of course, that law still allows you to make emergency calls from behind the wheel.

In another effort to protect students, the Legislature **increased the fine for passing a school bus when its flashing lights and stop signs are active.** The old minimum fine for a conviction was \$200, with a maximum of \$1,000. Passing a school bus now will cost from \$500 to \$1,250.

Texas Department of Transportation vehicles will now have the same protections afforded to police cars, fire trucks and ambulances. Under the new law, drivers must slow down or move into another lane when they approach a stopped TxDOT vehicle that's flashing blue or amber lights.

Lawmakers also toughened the penalty for drivers who flee after being involved in a deadly accident. According to the Department of Public Safety, many drivers do this because they were intoxicated, and the penalty for fleeing the scene was less than that for intoxication manslaughter. No more. **In accidents involving injuries or death, The penalty for fleeing the scene is the same as that for intoxication manslaughter: Two to 20 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$10,000.**



EARLY VOTING CLERKSHIPS

High school students may not be old enough to vote yet, but they can still play an important role in the democratic process under Sen. Uresti's Senate Bill 1134. The measure allows students to participate in voting clerkships, giving them an opportunity for a "hands-on" experience in how elections work. Under the bill, students who get permission from their schools can serve as early voting clerks. Each polling place will be allowed to have four student clerks. The program will provide a learning experience for students and valuable help for polling places. And that's not all. Students who get involved in the electoral process at a young age are more likely to be active voters throughout life. There are perks for students who volunteer — they can use the clerkship to fulfill a school service project, service requirement, or school-sponsored extracurricular activity, and get an excused absence for that missed day of school!

MORE FROM DISTRICT 19

In Memoriam

Once again in 2013, Texans were tragically reminded of the valor, courage, and sacrifice of first responders. The 15 volunteers who died April 17 in the fertilizer plant explosion in West were responding to a community emergency as they always did — without fear or hesitation. In this 12th anniversary of the 9-11 terrorist attack on America, we add the men of West to the long list of heroes we remember with pride. We salute them, along with the soldiers, law enforcement officers, and firefighters who have given their lives protecting their fellow Americans.



Veterans attending the groundbreaking for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the state Capitol



Be Prepared for Voting Changes

District 19 voters need to know that the Texas voter ID law was revived by a U.S. Supreme Court ruling and will remain in effect for the 2014 primary season, pending a challenge by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Under the law passed by the Texas Legislature in 2011, a voter must show one of the following forms of photo identification before they can cast their ballot:

- ★ Texas driver license issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety
- ★ Texas Election Identification Certificate issued by DPS
- ★ Texas personal identification card issued by DPS
- ★ Texas concealed handgun license issued by DPS
- ★ United States military identification card containing the person's photograph
- ★ United States citizenship certificate containing the person's photograph
- ★ United States passport

With the exception of the U.S. citizenship certificate, the identification must be current or have expired no more than 60 days before being presented at the polling place, according to the Texas Secretary of State's Office.

And whichever form of ID you use, remember that it's necessary that the name matches the registered voter rolls. If they don't match, you should change the name on your voter registration so it reads the same as the ID card, and make sure you do it 30 days before the election. Otherwise, you can still vote by signing an affidavit.

If you have questions about this process, visit www.votetexas.gov or call the Secretary of State's Voter Registration Division, 512-463-5653, or any of my district offices listed on the back of the newsletter.

Back to School Events



Sen. Uresti visits with volunteers at his annual Back-to-School Event at Palo Alto College

With the help of generous sponsors, Sen. Uresti participated in Back-to-School Events across Senate District 19 again this year, with some 4,000 kids and parents attending the largest fair, at San Antonio's Palo Alto College on Aug. 9. The San Antonio Food Bank arranged free meals, and each child received a backpack with school supplies. Health screenings, immunizations, and valuable information on community resources were also available. Across the district, Uresti gave out almost 10,000 backpacks at events in Brackettville, Camp Wood, Carrizo Springs, Crystal City, Eagle Pass, Del Rio, Rocksprings, San Antonio, and Uvalde.

Helpful Phone Numbers and Websites

Senator Uresti's San Antonio District Office	210-932-2568	Blue Ribbon Task Force.....	www.blueribbontaskforce.com
United Way's First Call for Help	2-1-1	Texas Legislature Online	www.capitol.state.tx.us
Child/Elder Abuse Hotline.....	800-252-5400	Texas Senate.....	www.senate.state.tx.us
Child Support Enforcement	800-252-8014	Texas House of Representatives.....	www.house.state.tx.us
Children's Health Insurance (CHIP).....	800-647-6558	Governor of Texas.....	www.governor.state.tx.us
Consumer Protection	800-621-0508	Office of the Attorney General.....	www.oag.state.tx.us
Crime Victim Compensation	800-983-9933	Texas 2-1-1 (United Way).....	www.211.org
Employee Rights	800-832-2829	Child/Elder Abuse Reporting.....	www.txabusehotline.org
HIV/STD Information	800-299-2437	Health & Human Services Commission	www.hhsc.state.tx.us
Medicaid Information	800-252-8263	Medicaid, Food Stamps & TANF	www.yourtexasbenefits.com
Medicare Information	800-633-4227	Texas Education Agency	www.tea.state.tx.us
Nursing Home Complaints	800-458-9858	Texas Department of Transportation	www.txdot.gov
Runaway Hotline.....	888-580-HELP (4357)	Texas Parks & Wildlife Department	www.tpwd.state.tx.us
Texas Veterans Commission	800-252-VETS (8387)	Texas Veterans Commission	www.tvc.state.tx.us
Texas Workforce Commission (Unemployment)....	800-558-8321	Texas Workforce Commission	www.twc.state.tx.us
Texas Youth Hotline.....	800-210-2278	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.....	www.va.gov
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.....	800-827-1000		

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